



THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A ROUND BUILDING TRADITION IN THE AEGEAN AND CRETE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence of the non-submerged type of round building in the settlements of prehistoric Aegean, including Crete. It complements our earlier discussion of the Minoan evidence that concentrated on the properties of architectural form and the cultural semantics of its perishable structure. This work explores the common characteristics that this particular architectural genre acquires in the prehistoric communities of the Greek mainland, the Aegean islands and Crete, along with the features that seem to demarcate distinct chronological and geographical groupings. More specifically, the systematic co-occurrence of features warrant, in our view, the identification of a hitherto unidentified round building type, detected in the iconography of Minoan Crete. It is the Minoan evidence par excellence that presents the greatest diversity of architectural variants, contexts and apparently function. On a more general level, the tradition of a round building type is inferred on the basis of the persistent adoption of a particular architectural form, along with the local adaptation of certain peculiarities that impinge on its cultural semantics. Our treatment of the material defines a conspectus of topics for further research, posing a frame for the historical understanding of a general building shape that in the Aegean may often, but not always, preserve the form and contents of a typical settlement house.

KEYWORDS: round buildings, Aegean, Neolithic, Bronze Age, iconography, architectural referent.

ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF A PARTICULAR BUILDING TYPE

Round buildings of non-funerary character are architecturally distinct, but defy direct assessment of their specific, cultural significance. Their generally flimsy structure and very small numbers (compared to other architectural types in the Aegean) might explain an overall apprehension to deal with these constructions as a distinct and peculiar class of evidence.

This paper aims to explore the emergence of the non-submerged type of round building as a distinct architectural genre. We shall delineate the systematic co-occurrence of features that reasonably warrant the identification of a round building type in the prehistoric Aegean and especially in Crete. This discussion complements our earlier treatment of the Minoan evidence that concentrated on architectural structure and the persisting conservatism of its perishable form in a particularly sophisticated environment, along with other contextual, iconographic and scriptural evidence (Yiannouli 2006b). We proposed that perishable structure resulted not as a technical failure but as a cultural choice whose semantics “revolve around the notion of ‘earth’ in many and varying manners, including building structure and features, content, context and iconography” (Yiannouli 2006b, 49-50).

Our understanding of the Aegean evidence posits the non-submerged type of round building within a broad, yet specific, archaeological pattern. A closer inspection of the published material reveals that architectural and stratigraphic correlations delineate certain trends that hold good for the

Aegean as well as for Cyprus (Yiannouli 2006a).

a) Round buildings are founded in the stereo of sites, indicating incipient settlement.

b) They emerge as part of a tripartite sequence (or one of three different ways through which incipient habitation or an incipient habitation horizon is archaeologically identified) in the form of (i) pits/bothroi, (ii) pit-houses of perishable structure with or without pits/bothroi, (iii) non-submerged round houses, usually on stone foundation, with or without pits/bothroi.

c) The complete sequence is evidenced in very few sites in the Aegean and Cyprus (EH I Eutresis, Aceramic Syllourokampos, Chalcolithic Lemba-Lakkous, cf. also the peculiar case of the Aceramic and Chalcolithic phases of Kissonerga-Mosphilia, Yiannouli 2006a, 31-2, 34, n. 1). In all other sites, incipient habitation takes the form of either (i) or (ii) or (iii) or (i) / (iii) or (ii) / (iii), (Yiannouli 2006a, figs 1-6).

d) The above architectural cum stratigraphic type of evidence is not confined in the incipient Neolithic but characterizes initial site occupation throughout the Neolithic and the subsequent Early Bronze Ages in both the Aegean as well as in Cyprus. Any type of evolution that may be occasionally discerned occurs in the form of structural evolution from pit-houses to ground-surface round houses (i.e. stages (ii) / (iii) in stratigraphic succession, cf. Neolithic I Syllourokampos, Neolithic II Kalavassos B, Chalcolithic Lemba-Lakkous, Erimi, Kissonerga-Mosphilia or EH I Eutresis, Yiannouli 2006a, 32-34) rather than with regard to any particular time period.

The proposition that pit-house architecture and incipient settlement are related has already been affirmed for the earliest architecture in the kebarian and the natufian levels, i.e. at the origin of incipient settlement, over a vast area, from Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and the Zagros (Aurenche 1981, 185-188 fig. 16; Aurenche and Kozłowski 1999, 46-49) to as far as Japan in the east (Renfrew and Bahn 1991, 304-305) and as far as Portugal in the west (Da Silva and Soares 1982). Relevant analogies between the Old and the New Worlds have been drawn (Rocek 1998). Although differing in perspectives and conclusions, scholars have tried to reason about the common features (neolithization/sedentism, elliptical/round buildings, different absolute dates) in relation to the respective settlement or regional sequences that they initiate (Rocek 1998; Flannery 2002).

The earliest Aegean pit-house architecture is now attributed to the neolithization horizon, conforming to the above picture (sites on Kythnos and Ikaria, also Thrace in the north, Sampson 2006, 35-47, 52 with earlier literature, discussion on pp. 106-110). Our particular understanding of the Aegean material, however, as already outlined, and the fact that the emergence of round building architecture needs to be assessed in terms of common as well as specific characteristics led us to regard its local, idiosyncratic features as equally seminal in the construction of its cultural semantics. This means that the historical understanding of specific examples may not be sufficiently conveyed in the form of generalized propositions on account of their general formal similarities. Conversely, it is unrealistic to think that

a historical type of understanding may ever occur without assessing it within a comparative frame of relevant evidence pertinent to archaeology: namely, architectural form and stratigraphy, use, settlement context, chronology and geographical and chronological distribution or other regularities that, in the Aegean at least, seem to fall within a tripartite constant: conservative form, generally perishable structure, small numbers.

In view of the above, the Aegean seems to encompass a cultural frame that is compact, yet sufficiently diversified, in order to explore some of the intrinsic properties of the non-submerged type of round building, or our stage (iii) type of incipient settlement occupation, along with the emergence and the development of this architectural tradition as a whole. Given that the relevant material is very fragmentary and rather neglected, the current discussion aims at defining a frame for investigation based on its pertinent properties.

ROUND BUILDINGS IN THE AEGEAN AND CRETE: NEOLITHIC AND EB EVIDENCE

The Neolithic Evidence

The earliest attestation of the non-submerged round buildings in the Aegean occurs in the course of the 5th millennium. There are only six or seven such examples from island or from inland habitation sites, mostly near the course of rivers. Their chronology, however, spans the entirety of the period, from the MN at Ay. Petros, Sporades (Efstratiou 1985, 14, 20, 51, plans IX:a, XX:b,c, plate 13:a), and perhaps Ayioryitika in Arcadia (Petraakis

2002, 27, 76-77; we believe that B10, the so-called "hearth", is in fact the stone socle of a round building, on account of its dimensions, similarity of construction technique to house A and blatant dissimilarity in location and form to the other hearths in the settlement); the transition to the LN at Saliagos in the Cyclades (Evans and Renfrew 1968, 17-18, 20-21, 26, figs. 7-8), early LN at Ambelia, Yannitsa, in Western Macedonia (Chrysostomou 2001, 489-490; Chrysostomou 1996, 165; Chrysostomou and Chrysostomou 1990, 177, fig. 9), the LN Dimini phase at the homonymous site (Chourmouziadis 1979, 158, fig. 15, pl. 33), the FN post-house in Aegina I (Walter and Felten 1981, 10, plan 3) and the FN at Phaistos on the island of Crete (Levi 1976, 416; Vagnetti 1972-1973, 27-29, figs. 17-18, 130: 1, 5; Benzi 2001; Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Distribution of MN (A. Petros, Ayioryitika) and LN round houses

Even on the basis of meager evidence, one can already detect certain peculiar characteristics:

1: The vast majority of round buildings are structures on stone foundations (Aegina I and Ambelia are post-houses).

2: Their superstructures must have been of materials perishable in nature, since no substantial remains have been detected archaeologically.

3: All of these round buildings form part of a settlement, situated among houses on stone socle but different in layout, mostly rectilinear.

4: In spite of their very poor state of preservation, we can note that the majority of them contained typical domestic assemblages (no evidence is recorded for Dimini; there is an exceptional concentration of 500 figurines at Ambelia).

5: Round buildings may appear individually or form a small group of structures (Saliagos, apparently Ay. Petros, Ambelia?).

6: On certain occasions these round buildings are found in stratigraphic succession, implying a conscious repetition or preservation of the same plan at the same place over time (Ay. Petros?, Saliagos, Ambelia).

7: The diameter of the structures measure ca: 3.50m at Ayioryitika, 5m at Ambelia, 4m at Saliagos building G and 2.50m at Phaistos. These diameters differ significantly from the diameter of other round structures measuring 1m, namely a stone ring (square S3) or stone platforms (square Q3) at Saliagos, that are probably special use or storage features. This is useful in terms of differentiation between habitation structures and special use features as well as indicative of potentially significant size differences between analogous types of construction.

8: Despite the rarity of occurrence, round buildings cover the entirety of

MN-LN with considerable lapses of time between the respective examples.

The Early Bronze Age Evidence

The EB evidence is considerably richer compared to the Neolithic, yet similarly scantier regarding the profusion of EB architectural evidence. Found for the most part in coastal sites, it dates from the earliest EB stratum at Perachora in Corinth (Fossey 1969, 53-60, fig. 1; Fossey and Morin 1986, 22), at Myrina (Dova 1997, 289, 290-291, figs. 2a, 2g; Avgerinou 1977, 274) and Poliochni on Lemnos (Bernabò-Brea 1964, 53-57, 86-96), at Ay. Ioannis Loukas on Thasos (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2001, 55-58) and continues into EB II at Orchomenos in Boeotia (Bulle 1907, 19-24, pls. II, IV, K; Marinatos 1946, 339, 341) and at Eutresis (Caskey and Caskey 1960, 137-139, figs. 5-6), at Tiryns in the Argolid (Kilian 1986, but cf. the EH III-MH I dating in Treuil 1983, 330; Müller 1930, 100, pl. 6A), at Olympia in Elis (Kyrieleis 1999, 186) and at Voidokoilia in Messenia (Korres 1981, 220-221, pl. B; Korres 1990, 3-4); or else, it is broadly dated to the EB at Aiani (Karamitrou-Mendeside 1989, 46, fig. 5; Karamitrou-Mendeside 1993, 653) and probably Keros (Vallianou 1975, 327, pl. 227b-g).

Some elliptical wall fragments that, according to the excavators, may possibly come from circular (or apsidal?) structures are recorded from EH II Tsoungiza in Corinthia (Pullen 1990, 339, fig. 3), Asine in the Argolid (Frödin and Persson 1938, 65, fig. 46) and Pylos in Messenia (Blegen 1973, 219-224, figs 347-8 and 275-279). Round buildings in Eutresis, Tiryns and Voidokoilia, in particular, may be set aside by forming the earliest instances of such structures in a more substantial version and careful

execution (Fig. 2A). The EB evidence exhibits the following characteristics:

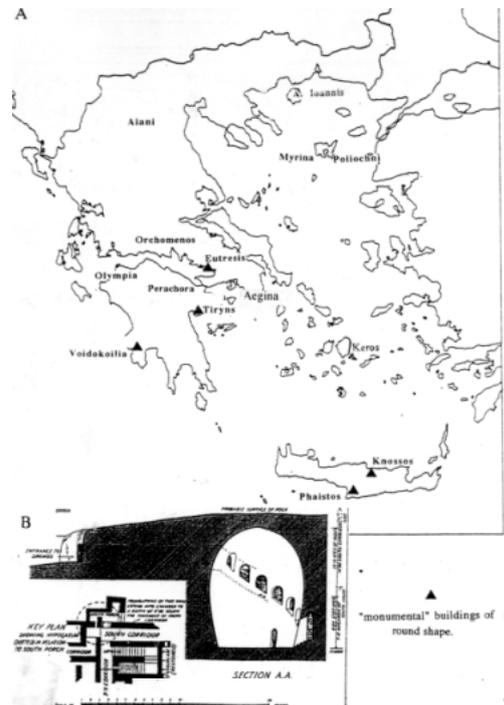


Fig. 2. A: Distribution of EB round houses, including "monumental" buildings of round shape. B: The pre-palatial Hypogaeum at Knossos (after Evans 1921, fig. 74)

1: The sheer majority of buildings are constructed on a stone socle (except Perachora).

2: As a rule, superstructure is similarly perishable in nature, but there appears a tendency to use clay (Perachora, Myrina) or plinth (Orchomenos, Tiryns, wall M at Pylos).

3: As in the Neolithic period, the EH examples are also embedded in a settlement. On many occasions they co-exist with other types of habitation structures that vary in layout from site to site (except at Ay. Ioannis where nothing resembling a house has so far come to light).

4: On certain occasions, their role in settlement is perplexing (e.g. the group at Orchomenos), but the sheer majority of instances include typically domestic

contents (Myrina, Poliochni, Aiani, Ay. Ioannis, Perachora, Orchomenos D1), including the doubtful cases (Pylos, Asine). Tiryns, Voidokoilia and Eutresis, having unusual dimensions and hypothetical or unclear character, need to be studied on their own right.

5: They may appear individually (Eutresis, Perachora, Olympia, Tiryns, Voidokoilia, the doubtful EB Pylos, Asine and Tsoungiza) or as a small group of structures (Myrina, Poliochni Nero, Aiani, Ay. Ioannis, Orchomenos).

6: Remarkably unique is the stratigraphic succession of three and seven huts under megara 605 and 832, respectively, in Poliochni (the stratigraphy of Pylos and Asine may also indicate two architectural phases).

7: Buildings vary in diameter, ca 3.80-5.50m at Myrina, 2-3m internally at Ay. Ioannis, 7.20-8m at Orchomenos (D1 measuring only ca 3m and 2m, internal and external radii, respectively), 6.40m at Eutresis. For the Tiryns Rundbau measurements differ; Pullen (1985, 178-181, cf. discussion), calculates the external and the internal radii, respectively, at ca 13.95m and 4.9m. The smaller Rundbau in Olympia measures ca 2.9m externally and 1.9m internally. As in the Neolithic Period, this considerable size differentiation is further contrasted to the size of round structures identified as silos (cf. Myrina, Poliochni Nero phase structure g, circular silo with ext. diam. 2.10m).

8: Wall widths, compared to the Neolithic building G at Saliagos (wall width 0.40m) and the single line of stones at Phaistos, measure as follows:

EB I: Perachora 0.40m, Myrina ca 0.25-0.50m or more, Poliochni ca 0.25-0.50m, Ay. Ioannis and Aiani – line of stones.

EB II: Olympia Rundbau ca 1m, Orchomenos ca 1-1.20m, Eutresis B ca 1.05m (cf. also the much larger Tiryns Rundbau).

Doubtful wall fragments: Pylos wall M and Asine wall 1 ca 0.50m, Tsoungiza ca 0.60m.

9: In absolute years the span during EB I-III is considerable, and so indicative of the small numbers in relation to number of settlements and time span over which this type is evidenced in the EB Age as well.

It follows that the correspondence exemplified between the relevant Neolithic and EB examples is striking, despite their numerical paucity which rather dawns as an emerging characteristic. Unless they form part of the tripartite sequence outlined at the beginning of this paper, both the Neolithic and the Early Bronze evidence is constructed in the stereo of sites. The published evidence reveals one exception, however, for the EB I round structures of Myrina (phase 2) are erected in the fire debris of the first occupation phase (phase 1), selecting, however, spots without prior building underneath (Dova 1997, 289). The preferential use of clay for the superstructure and monumentality in size are two more attributes that pertain solely to the EB Age. In fact the general increase observed in diameters and wall widths between the Neolithic (cf. point 7 above) and the EB examples (cf. points 7, 8 above) coupled with the increased numbers during the latter period testify that this architectural tradition gained ground from the 5th to the 3rd millennia. It should be noted, however, that in the EB increased wall width does not invariably correlate with general size increase, occurring on occasion at the

expense of the area enclosed, as in the cases of Orchomenos D1, the Olympia Rundbau (and even the Tiryns Rundbau). Although the majority of these round structures may be typically characterized as houses during both the N and the EB Ages, they may still differ considerably in size even within the same settlement (e.g. Orchomenos). Admittedly, the 500 figurines in early LN Ambelia are so far an astonishing find.

All in all, the relevant evidence in the Aegean indicates that round buildings constitute a distinct architectural genre embedded in the Neolithic. Generally constructed with perishable material on a stone ring, they mingle with houses of different layout in the same settlement. Remarkably few, both within a site and among Neolithic or EB habitation, they unflinchingly persist over a good number of centuries resisting drastic change of general form but not size or specific formal properties. The even fewer and essentially unknown monumental structures from Boeotia southwards, especially in the Peloponnese, emerge within a typically EH realm of distribution. Rather, it is the lasting existence of an often flimsy and scarce type of construction that constitutes their most striking property.

The Peculiar Nature of Neolithic and Pre-Palatial Crete

Admittedly, the Neolithic group can be best appreciated as an emergence inseparable from the ensuing 3rd millennium evidence. And it is against the wider emergence of round building architecture in the Aegean that the earliest such structure on Crete, the FN hut of Phaistos, should be construed as its earliest, southernmost manifestation.

The FN hut of Phaistos rests on stones founded along the perimeter of a circle hewn in the natural kouskouras; a maximum of three courses may be seen at places (Levi 1976, 416). The stratigraphy points to the existence of perishable superstructure, for it consists of a whitish-grey earthen floor above which an ashen level of ca 0.25m is covered by a much thinner layer of yellow earth (Levi 1976, 416; Vagnetti 1972-3, 27, figs 17-18). The earthen floor, resting on a gravel course that covers an earthen rock fill with shells and bones, preserved typical evidence of a domestic sort of deposit: pottery, obsidian blades, stone pellets, a concave palette and a variety of stone tools and implements (Levi 1976, 416; Vagnetti 1972-3, 29, fig. 130:1, 5). The round hut is situated within a settlement of rectilinear buildings. Although no longer the sole case (Benzi mentions the discovery of more, e.g. 2001, 132-3, 134), the general character of the Phaistos hut corresponds to the general characteristics earlier cited for the Neolithic.

Furthermore, the so-called “kouloura” under the proto-palatial pavement of the west court of Phaistos seems to confirm the fact that round buildings of substantial size appear in Minoan settlements as early as EM III – MM IA (Damiani Intelicato and Chighine 1984), in a horizon immediately posterior to the EH II monumental versions. It requires a study on its own right before accepting or rejecting the possibility that the Helladic and the Minoan examples are at all related. Or even before affirming the proposition that the FN hut and the pre-palatial “kouloura” of Phaistos are instances of modest and monumental round building tradition as it appeared

in the Aegean settlements in the course of the previous centuries. What this data *may* readily ascertain, however, is the awareness of the round building tradition in Phaistos, given the recovery of EM sherds on the ruins of the FN hut (Vagnetti 1972-3, 27), the date of the pre-palatial “kouloura” itself and the succession of Neolithic and pre-palatial strata under “kouloura” II (Levi 1976, 349-350). It is also indicated by a structural analogy between the FN hut and “kouloura” II, namely, comparable earthen floors of whitish-grey and whitish earth, respectively (Levi 1976, 416 and 350, fig. 546-7).

Knossos presents an equally intriguing set of data. The structural evidence of the aceramic settlement corresponds to our stage (i) type of incipient settlement occupation of pits/bothroi (Evans 1971, 101-102, figs 1, 3; Yiannouli 2006a, fig. 2).

However, renewed investigation below the northeaster corner of the Central Palatial Court brought to light a potentially significant type of construction. An elliptical structure (0.30m wall thickness, 0.70m high) near the fringe of the mound, dated to local EN II or ca the first half of the 5th millennium in C14 terms, was used for a long period of time (stratum IV, levels 28-20) below successive habitation floors corresponding to the interior of houses (Efstratiou *et al.* 2004, 40, 46 and 44, Table 1.1). The excavators refrain from its definite assessment. They refer to it in quotes as “retaining wall”, or they consider it as a massive wall or as an architectural feature that marks the overall spatial arrangement of the settlement (Efstratiou *et al.* 2004, 40). However, there is nothing in this published account to exclude the

possibility that this structure corresponds to the remnants of a round type of building. We should of course wait for the excavators’ final views on this issue. For the sake of argument, the width of the EN II wall compared to other Neolithic buildings, such as Building G at Saliagos (ca. 0.40m), is narrower. And sizable round buildings (although semi-subterranean) are not unknown (e.g. NN Topolnica, diam. >10m; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki *et al.* 1999 with earlier references; Yiannouli 2006a, fig. 4). Saliagos and Topolnica are not here cited as necessary analogues of EN II Knossos, particularly in view of the limited excavation area, but as indications that round building in Aegean settlements may vary in peculiar ways. Consequently, the possibility that the Knossos elliptical wall is an instance of the non-submerged type of round building is worth examining. Further judgment, however, may not be advanced until more is published about the recent finds from Neolithic Knossos as well as from Phaistos.

Equally problematic is a later instance from Knossos, belonging to the monumental version of round building in settlement, although unique in being entirely subterranean. Located under the south porch of the later Palace (Fig. 2B), its character still eludes us (for problems regarding architectural reconstruction and use, see references in Strasser 1997, 76; Belli 1999, 29-30). According to Evans, the bee-hive Hypogaeum was “packed with pottery” as foundation for the first palace, dated mostly to MM I with earlier *and later* sherds (Daybook 1908, 59) or “prevalingly MM I or earlier and... nothing... later...” (Daybook 1908, 61-2; 1910, 1-2; Daybooks cited in Belli 1999, 26-7). Evans is not consistent

about the date of this fill, while most of this material is now missing. The surviving ca 100 sherds are mostly attributed to MM IA, but MM IIA, MM III/LM I and LM IA sherds have also been recorded (Momigliano 1991, 197). Now, if Evans' mention of later material is not entirely mistaken, corresponding to sherds of a later (MM II – LM IA) date, provided that they themselves are not a case of misplacement, then not only the architectural character of the building but also its interpretation as foundation fill for the earlier palace becomes problematic (for certain structural analogies between this building and later building models, Yiannouli 2006b, 44). Whatever their original purposes, one may not but notice that both the pre-palatial Hypogaeum of Knossos and the pre-palatial "kouloura" of Phaistos were located in areas adjacent to major palace entrances, the South Porch and the Grand Staircase, respectively.

In this fragmentary and ill-understood body of data, one may include the Lebena find, despite its tholos tomb provenance. Recent discussion identifies it as an EM I – IIA round house model with conical roof, door, windows and clerestory (Alexiou and Warren 2004, 114, fig. 32.512, pl. 109 A, B). Now, the interesting thing about the Lebena model is not merely the information it provides on the missing superstructure. Rather, it is the encounter of a round building model on an island with scarce evidence of round building architecture. The only other EB round hut model comes from Tiryns, a grave good as well, from Grave F of the Unterburg (Müller 1938, 107-8, Taf. XXXIII: 1-3; Fig. 5:c-d). This, however, may be understood as modeling an

architectural type long lived in the Helladic and the Aegean settlements (Figs 1-2), although its sepulchral employment does indicate a shift of context for the Mainland, as it does for the island of Crete. So, the significance of the analogous architecture between the FN Phaistos hut (or huts?) and the Lebena model may lie beyond the obvious affinities of chronological and geographical proximity. For, they may indicate the range of use of the round building type within a potential home ground located in the Messara, as one major area of its (comparatively) emphatic employment on the island. The general demarcation of this broad area in relation to this particular building type has not been missed, for "The circular house at Phaistos and certain pottery motifs in the Messara resemble features of the Erimi culture on Cyprus" (Watrous 2001, n. 61, with references). And although, as stated, this paper examines data from settlements, a brief comment on the peculiar nature of the Cretan funerary evidence emerges as a corollary with twofold relevance. The Messara tholoi, being non-submerged types of round structures, may be seen as preserving a tradition of round building alive and flourishing in Minoan Crete, by transposing it in funerary grounds, in sharp contrast to the rest of the Aegean (the Erimi culture included). The burial deposition of the round Lebena model is cogent with this hypothesis, although, as we shall see further below, its purport is better grasped in the light of chronologically posterior evidence. The above attestations, however, certainly highlight even more clearly the scarce encounter of round building in the pre-palatial settlements of Crete.

RELEVANT MM AND LM EVIDENCE: THE STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

On Round Building in the 2nd millennium B.C.: The discrepancy between architecture and iconography

In view of the above, the question posed by the pre-palatial record of Crete is not so much about its scantiness *per se*, but rather about its considerable scantiness compared to the rest of the Aegean. This becomes a standard characteristic for the architecture of both MH and MM times, as it is currently understood. The MH record is at best in the wane, if existing at all (the elliptical fragment from Zygouries may be part of an apsidal building, Blegen 1928, 28); whereas, the MM evidence from Myrto-Pyrgos and Ay. Photia is not sufficiently clarified. The two round structures of Pyrgos III (MM IB-MMII/IIIA), located on the northern slope and the hill-top, respectively, are identified as cisterns (Cadogan 1992, with earlier references). In Ay. Photia, two of the three round buildings preserve a stone socle and are reported as probable MM II tholoi, (Tsipopoulou 1992), particularly because some of their dimensions (radii, wall thickness, ratio between r/wthickness) seem consistent with tholos measurements (Belli 2003). They may be contemporary with curvilinear walls in the southwest (Tsipopoulou 1988, 46; 1992, 69). The third building is of light structure, possibly a “kouloura” (Tsipopoulou 1988, 33). We believe that without studying these cases in systematic detail and in a comparative way little can be gleaned with certainty. For functions, such as cisterns and “koulouras”, are often evoked on

account of a general impression of shape rather than structural or other important properties that they may or may not be shared between buildings of theoretically analogous function, even within the same settlement (Strasser 1997).

The most significant aspect of the Minoan evidence, however, is that the round building tradition appears to survive archaeologically in iconography more than actual architecture. Namely, in the iconography of two homogenous sets of data, the so-called “talismanic” seals of MM III-LM I (Onassoglou 1985) and, subsequently, in a series of plastic models of round clay huts spanning LM IIIA2-LG/Early Orientalizing Periods (ca 1350-late 8th c. B.C. with a 200 year gap between the Sub-Minoan and the PGB Periods; Mavriyannaki 1972; Hägg 1990; Mercereau 1993). Not too strong a point can be made with regard to the chronology of the prehistoric (16 preserved examples, plus 2 doors) or the historical sets (5 or more?), given the unstratified context of at least 6 specimens, mostly from Chania and Phaistos (Mercereau 1993, cat. nos 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 19) and even the total number of these specimens, especially from Gortyn (Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 21-22; Hägg 1990, 96).

This body of evidence acquires a distinctly Cretan character, when compared with typologically contemporary data from other parts of the Aegean. The most recent and extensive account on seals maintains that on Crete glyptic development is largely indigenous and continuous from EM II – LM III, the evidence coming mostly from burials (Krzyszowska 2005, 36). Geometric and linear motifs decorate the earlier specimens but preoccupation

with iconic representations appears early enough, so that it is difficult to discern between pre-palatial and proto-palatial glyptic forms (Krzyszowska 2005, 38-45, 58, figs 54a-76). Representations of the natural world of plants and animals, down to the zoomorphic seal shapes figure prominently in this horizon (Sbonias 1995; Krzyszowska 2005, 60-76, esp. figs 110-121). Talismanic seal iconography is firmly rooted in this background of the iconic rendering of the natural world or elements related to it, the style ceasing at the end of LM IB (Krzyszowska 2005, 136, 248). Contrary to the Cretan state, mainland and Aegean island specimens derive mainly from EB II settlements, decline or cease afterwards, employ linear motifs and revive seal use only after an influx of Cretan products triggers Mycenaean craftsmanship well into the Shaft Grave Period from the 16th c. onwards; round hut representation in particular, encountered in MM III – LM I talismanic iconography, does not seem to figure prominently among the mainland talismans, nor is it part of the typical repertory of the “cut style”, that succeeds the “talismanic” on the mainland (Krzyszowska 2005, 36-37, 232, 118-119, 248-249, figs 473-477).

The modeling of round building in clay exhibits a similarly localized character, although building models in general are encountered since the Neolithic (Marangou 1992). Apart from the analogous, yet exceptional, round models from Lebena and Tiryns, it is only the group dating from LM IIIA2 onwards that forms a coherent body of data. The odd Helladic and the few Minoan instances (the Menelaion, the Monastiraki and the Archanes models, cf. also the Town Mosaic) do not depict

round buildings, but a LC I fragment from Thera apparently does (Hägg 1990, 101; Dumas 1988). This picture does not essentially alter mainland apprehensions or the prominently Cretan preoccupations regarding naturalism and iconic representation, already discussed in relation to seal iconography (however, cf. Discussion, The Aegean Early Bronze Age c-e and Palatial Crete b).

On the Minoan Round Building

It is then reasonable to infer that talismanic seal iconography and the LM IIIA2-LG/Early Orientalizing hut models in question transcribe an Aegean building form into a vocabulary distinct for Minoan Crete. We have already discussed the reasons as to why it is preferable to identify the huts represented on the talismanic seals as round (Yiannouli 2006b, 41-43). Moreover, comparing the stratified examples from the two data sets reveals that morphological analogies are retained despite the different materials and manners of execution, indeed in spite of the time interval itself. For such gaps in time, either real or purely archaeological, have already been detected within the round building tradition in the Aegean since its earliest manifestation.

Scholarly consensus holds that although the images on seals and the terracotta models form two homogeneous sets, no two instances from either group are identical. Our analysis concentrated on the type of architectural features that recur systematically rather than invariably in all instances in either set, since, as already noted, any two cases may closely resemble rather than narrowly replicate each other.

We thus discerned two main variants, respectively on seals and models and by analogy in Minoan architecture. A third variant may be distinguished with regard to a particular vessel type:

Type 1: Wooden frame: interwoven perishable matter or columnar uprights in twin or consecutive arrangement, intercolumniation slashes evoking finer lattice; possibly as hut on piles; occasionally standing on platform forming central part of tripartite arrangement (Yiannouli 2006b, 40, 45).

Type 2: Walls made of clay (or rubble or pisé?). They are rendered in a way that employs a tripartite color/hue code (black-red-white) on account of the raw materials chosen (clays/slips/inclusions/pigments, Yiannouli 2006b, 41).

Type 2a: Semi-subterranean huts, on account of specific architectural features and analogies (wall slant, relation between: floor diameter / maximum wall diameter / threshold level) evidenced between models and round buildings of different function in palatial settlements (Malia, Archanes, Knossos?, Yiannouli 2006b, 43-46).

Type 3: Vessel type in the form of hut with handle (S-shaped or other handle attachment on proto- and neopalatial seals and possibly in inscriptional Linear B evidence, Yiannouli 2006b, 45-46, 47).

These typological similarities are reinforced by other features or analogies depicted and shared in common.

In all cases the floors or bases are depicted as flat, but in most instances a demarcation between this part of the edifice and its superstructure is denoted by a slight expansion of the perimeter beyond the walls. This is observed on the sheer majority (15 out of 18) of talismanic seals (Fig. 3: 1, 3-12, 14, KO-5, KO-11 and a) and about half of the

prehistoric models (Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 2-3, 6-7, 9, 12, 14-15, i.e. in eight out of sixteen models, the two doors not being counted; Fig. 4: 1, 4).

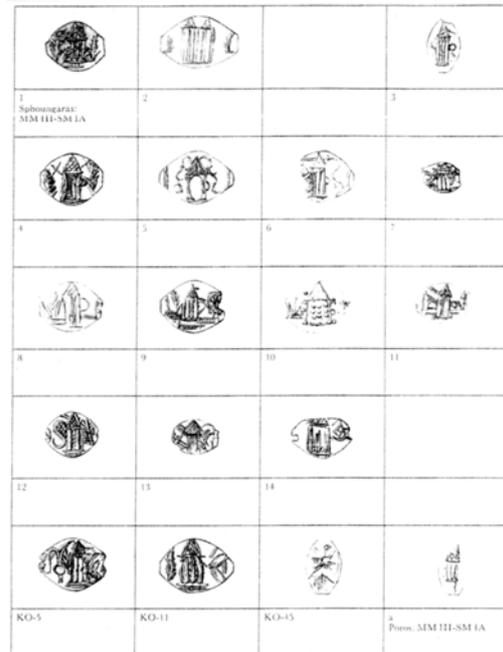


Fig. 3. Huts on MM III – LM I talismanic seals (after Onassoglou 1985, Taf. X)

We have further suggested that a wooden double deck or a floor in the manner of a hut on piles may be reconstructed, but not the sort of stone socle evidenced in actual edifices (Yiannouli 2006b, 38-39). Representations of buildings on seals seem to signal rather than depict the actual door by making shorthand reference by way of a handle; in turn, the form, placement and scale of the handles find a direct analogue in the lugs of the models in the later period. The number of cases that do bear such a device, compared to those that show no relevant signs whatsoever, constitute the two categories evidenced in both seals and models, whereby the majority of cases similarly fall within the former, thus associating with none exclusively

(of sixteen models: eleven cases with lugs, Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 2-4, 6-7, 9, 11-12, 14-15, 18; three cases without lugs, Mercereau 1993, nos. 1, 8, 10; two unclear cases, Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 13, 16. Of eighteen seals: nine with handle, Fig. 3: 3-11; six without, Fig. 3: 1, 2, KO-5, KO-11, KO-45, a; three of disproportionate size, hence exceptional, Fig. 3: 12-14).

The rendering of walls and roofs portrays a similar picture that may be summarized as follows:

1: Construction details of both walls and roofs are depicted on the iconic representations of buildings on the seals only. On some seals the lateral sides of the roof contour are rendered in a straight line (Fig. 3: 4, 6, 7, 9, 10-12) or slightly concave (Fig. 3: 1-2, 3, 5), whereas in few cases a slightly convex contour gives the impression of smooth roundness (Fig. 3: 13, KO-11, KO-45, a). Such idiosyncrasies seem to be traced in the conical roofs of the clay models too, be the profile more or less straight-lined, slightly concave or slightly convex, regarding the prehistoric examples (Fig. 4: 1, 5, 4; Straight-lined: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 7, 10, 15-16, 18; slightly concave: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 1, 13; slightly convex: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 11-12).

2: There is a greater, but not strikingly different, variety in the rendering of wall curvature among the clay models (4 types – vertical, slightly concave, flaring out, slightly swelling (Fig. 4: 3, 4, 2, 5; Vertical: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 4, 11; slightly concave: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 1, 9; flaring out: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 2, 10, 16, 18; slightly swelling: Mercereau 1993, cat. nos. 3, 6-8, 12-15) compared to the earlier representations on the seals (3 types – vertical, Fig. 3: 1,

3, 5-6, 8-9-14, KO-5, KO-45; swelling out, Fig. 3: 2, 7, KO-11, a; slightly concave, Fig. 3: 4). The three out of these four types in wall rendering (vertical, slightly concave, slightly swelling) are common to both sets.

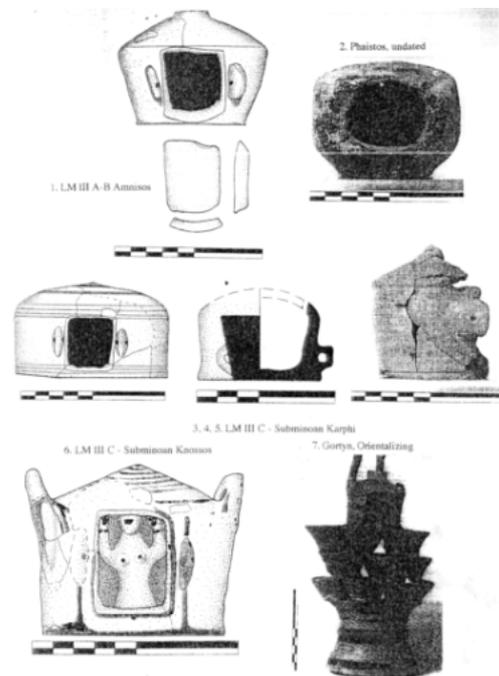


Fig. 4. Clay hut models from Crete (after Mercereau 1993, figs 9-10, 19-20, 22, 26, 34)

3: On the seals set, a particular emphasis is clearly placed on walls as vertical (thirteen out of eighteen examples), whereas on models this emphasis is observed among the swelling type of rendering (eight out of sixteen prehistoric cases). Such quantitative differences may not be significant in a numerical sense, but are indicative of the differential preferences observed between the two sets.

4: It is the formal analogies in the rendering of roof contour (straight lined, concave, convex) and walls (vertical, concave, swelling, but not flaring out) that constitute the common morphological elements between the

two sets, not the numerical representation of any variant in either set.

5: The greater typological variety in the wall rendering of the hut models (plus flaring out walls), the differential tendency to employ the swelling type of walls in models but the vertical in seals, and the consistent elimination of all depiction of means and manner of construction on models contrary to seals, are three aspects that constitute areas of divergence between these two chronologically and typologically distinct sets.

It then follows that the buildings represented on seals and the hut models exhibit clear and consistent formal affinities, regarding floor, wall and roof rendering.

That the aspects of divergence delineated in 1-5 above are either exhibited in clay models only (flaring out walls, emphasis on the swelling rendering of walls) or on seals only (construction details, emphasis on vertical walls) makes it difficult to accept that the iconography of the seals set a prototype for the modeling of the huts. Therefore, although each set of data is homogenous, the architectural referent in either may be found in neither, since no two buildings in either group are identical, varying instead, along certain concrete lines.

Since these typological features and analogies are generally shared by all cases from either set, it follows, in our view that the situation is best explained as adherence to a referent, which is commonly shared and so reproduced by resorting to concrete, recognizable images. In other words, the iconographic and the plastic rendering of these buildings point to the existence of a

commonly recognized referent, whose reality needs to be independently confirmed, and so further sought, outside the realm on which its current archaeological inference is based.

Of course, the suggestion that the buildings on seals and the hut models reproduce tangible or typical architectural forms can be unequivocally proven only if the respective structures are archaeologically recorded (and satisfactorily published). Such direct archaeological documentation becomes even more difficult for the Aegean, considering that from the MN onwards these buildings are invariably recorded as perishable in superstructure and numerically few. It is for these reasons that we sought to confirm the inferred architectural reality in the tangible features and analogies of substantial (hence surviving) edifices of similar layout (admittedly not function) from palatial settlements, here outlined as Type 2a (Yiannouli 2006b, 43-45), and also in other relevant areas, such as in the iconic representations from the Minoan glyptic and the scripts, here outlined as Type 3 (cf. also discussion on the semantics of hut representation in Linear B, Yiannouli 2006b, 47-48). In sum, the fact that formal properties (also, iconography and context) are patterned but not technically exclusive to any particular means, matter or mode of representation, impinges, in our view, on the existence of a building frame that lies beyond each particular seal and model set (Yiannouli 2006b, 48-50).

Our finding regarding the tangible reality of a hitherto undetected building type in the iconography of Minoan architecture is thus hardly in dissonance with the proposed character of neopalatial glyptic, for “the inclusion of

architectural representations makes them site-specific, indicating a desire to pinpoint the locale of a particular activity", at least in the case of cult and ritual" (Krattemaker 1995, 132). In fact, the close correspondence between architecture and models, or architecture and iconography, has been repeatedly and fruitfully explored (on the relation between architecture and models, Shoep 1994, Pelon 2001, Poursat 2001, 487-489; on architecture and iconography, Shaw 1978, Beyer 1987). "Représentations plus fidèles de la réalité" is also inferred for the character of house models in the Aegean, the Balkans and Russia in the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age in general (Marangou 1992, 180, 191), although the number of such finds and the range of use in the different periods and areas may differ (Marangou 1992, 202-3, 210-11, 235).

DISCUSSION: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL VERSUS THE HISTORICAL PICTURE IN THE LIGHT OF FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of attestations based on the archaeological evidence will now be discussed in a survey of chronological order.

The Aegean Neolithic

Non-submerged round buildings in Aegean settlements occur in the course of the 5th millennium B.C. They are found in few settlements as single instances or a group of similar structures among houses of different layout, mostly rectilinear. They generally rest on a stone socle, have perishable superstructure and typical domestic deposits. Occasionally, they are identified as post-houses. We suggested that FN Phaistos

is the earliest instance of the above scheme on the island of Crete. However, this should be understood as a provisional statement given the possibility that the elliptical wall under the northeastern corner of the central court of the Knossian palace may belong to a round building (see earlier discussion on Neolithic Crete). The study of EN II architecture at Knossos would be of seminal importance in deciding about the apparent chronological priority of the emergence of round building at Phaistos; also, about the nature of the Knossian Neolithic itself and about the place of Crete in relation to the rest of the Aegean in the light of the previous discussion. In other words, deciding on the archaeological nature of the EN II evidence from Knossos would bear directly on the reconstruction of the architectural history of events in the Aegean during the 5th millennium. This, in turn, would confirm the current archaeological picture that the bulk of Neolithic and Early Bronze evidence consists of actual edifices rather than building representations and that the Greek mainland and the Aegean islands preserve a greater number of examples that are more widely distributed; but it may alter the impression that the Cretan evidence is as localized and chronologically posterior as hitherto estimated.

The Aegean Early Bronze Age

1: Compared to the Neolithic, round houses abound in the Early Bronze Age, but still constitute a very small fraction of EB architecture. They occur individually or in groups in settlements with rectilinear houses, stand on a stone socle with perishable superstructure,

have domestic deposits and are sometimes found in stratigraphic succession as in the Neolithic. Often built in generally larger dimensions, size differentiation among or even within settlements remains considerable.

Although no round houses have so far come to light from EM Crete, the EM I – IIA Lebena model reveals knowledge of this type. Its sepulchral context in the manner of the comparable EB Tiryns model indicates that models of round houses are recorded from the 3rd millennium in funerary contexts in both Crete and the mainland. The current archaeological picture, however, is not sufficiently studied in order to decide on the following:

a) Whether the lack of EM round houses corresponds to a historical reality (never existed) or to the current state of archaeological knowledge (not yet recorded or discovered). The latter is not unrealistic in view of the apparent scarcity of this type in Crete as well as its perishable nature in general.

b) Whether the lack of EM round houses is to be expected, because it relates to the particulars of the Cretan settlement occupation pattern. On the one hand, round houses, especially as our stage (iii) type of incipient settlement indication in the stereo of sites, should largely correspond to the FN/EMI horizon in Crete, when a considerable new settlement foundation occurs (recent summary with earlier arguments by Hood, Vagnetti and Warren in Nowicki 2006). On the other hand, it is as plausible to maintain that the discussion understandably centers on the sites of Knossos and Phaistos, despite our poor state of comprehension of the relevant evidence. Incipient occupation traces typical for the Aegean,

be they in the form of pits/bothroi (Aceramic Knossos) or round building (Knossos?, Phaistos), are reasonably confined within these sites, on account of establishing the two major cum oldest uninterrupted sequences from the Aceramic and the FN, respectively, on the island of Crete. The role of Knossos and Phaistos in refining the cultural content of “incipience” becomes thus paramount.

c) Whether it is significant that the modeling of round buildings, as indicated by the Lebena and the Tiryns models, postdates the modeling of other house types in Aegean prehistory.

d) Whether the Lebena and the Tiryns models portray a semantic shift, whereby the domestic character of round buildings is now transferred from settlement to funerary contexts. This bears directly on the discussion regarding the origin of the Minoan tholoi. The association of the Lebena model with the homonymous tholos may encapsulate such a transposition, particularly in view that an analogous shift of assimilation could be envisaged for the other major “house-tomb” category on the island of Crete (Soles 1992).

e) Whether the use of models of round houses in the funerary contexts of the Early Bronze Age and the construction of substantial round edifices in the settlements of the Early Bronze Age indicate a process of reorganizing the cultural semantics of round buildings in the communities of the Aegean in the 3rd millennium B.C.

2: The employment of the round shape for buildings of much larger dimensions constitutes nevertheless the most striking development in the Early Bronze settlements. These buildings

have not been identified as houses narrowly speaking, nor have they been attributed with a known function (except for Tiryns), in either Crete and in the mainland. The phenomenon is attested in the 3rd millennium in both areas, the Cretan examples postdating the earliest known mainland cases (Eutresis B, Tiryns, Voidokoilia, Prepalatial Phaistos, the elusive Hypogaeum at Knossos).

Their morphology, use and character are essentially unknown. They also occur as single instances in settlements with smaller, rectilinear houses. A comparative examination of their architectural form (walls, roofs, floors, doors, columnar elements, wall widths, diameters, ground / basement level, construction materials), contents and settlement context (stratigraphy, chronology, inter- and intra-site correlations) are necessary for a historical understanding of their nature.

Palatial Crete

This sort of study is particularly imperative for Minoan Crete. The current archaeological picture of scarce and chronologically posterior Cretan round buildings contrasts sharply with the nature of the available evidence in palatial times. The bulk of this evidence is indirect in the form of building representations on neopalatial seals and postpalatial models of clay huts. Our examination of co-occurring features and architectural analogies in these iconic representations, along with their respective contexts over a long time span, led us to define a distinct typological genre that, in our view, reproduced tangible or typical architectural forms. We discerned buildings of wooden frame and clay structure as well as variant types (pile

hut, hut in the centre of tripartite arrangement, semi-subterranean hut); also the representation of a vessel type in the form of hut with handle. The inferred realities (actual buildings or building type, pottery type) were corroborated by relevant analogies observed in related categories of archaeological evidence:

1) Formal architectural properties (Yiannouli 2006b, 43-45).

2) The ideographic character of the scripts (Fig. 5e).

3) The iconography of seals (Yiannouli 2006b, 45-46).

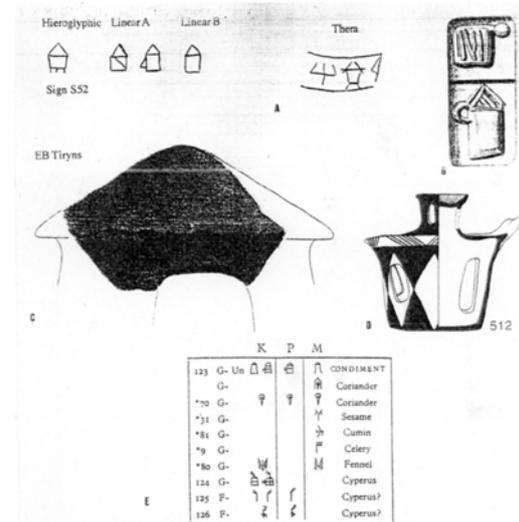


Fig. 5. Hut representations. a: Ideograms from Crete and Thera (after Evans 1921a, fig. 477.S52 and p. 639). b: Model on protopalatial seal (after CMS 112, no 315d. c: The EB Tiryns clay model (after Müller 1938, Taf. XXXII.1). d: The EM I-IIA Levena model (after Alexiou and Warren 2004, fig. 32.512. e: The Linear B hut ideogram in the G-series (after Chadwick 1973, fig. 10)

These attestations address the following areas for consideration:

a) It appears that round building representation is largely in vogue in Minoan Crete rather than elsewhere in the Aegean. The relevant iconography depicts details of superstructure that do

not survive archaeologically, except indirectly in the muddle of matter in excavation trenches.

b) It appears that clay or rubble superstructure on a stone socle, as opposed to a wooden frame of construction, is by far the sort of type encountered in excavation. Such analogy is not evidenced in the available (or published) data for Minoan building representation. It may be argued that the preference for a wooden as opposed to a clay/rubble type of structure is largely a neopalatial, as opposed to a post-palatial custom. This sort of distinction, although archaeologically apparent, may not sufficiently convey historical reality. It is instructive that the LC I “bee-hive” fragment from Akrotiri on Thera, dated to the horizon that falls within the palatial orbit of Crete, is similar to the Minoan post-palatial hut models. On the other hand, the hieroglyphic sign of “hut on piles” preserved in both Linear A and B (Evans 1921a, fig. 477.S52) is engraved on the rim of a vase with part of a Linear A inscription, also from Thera (Evans 1921a, 637, n.2. Fig. 5: a). The ideographic character of the earlier script retained through Linear A and B and the Thera evidence reinforce the possibility that actual huts (or even clay hut models or vessels) could have existed on Crete or elsewhere, at different horizons, in the manner that is attested on a proto-palatial steatite prism seal (Fig. 5: b). The EB Levina and Tiryns models indicate, inter alia, that quantitative differences, although apparent, may not sufficiently capture the historical subtleties of localized trends (Fig. 5: c, d).

(c) It appears that it is within palatial Crete that this house type acquires clearly recognised and systematic associations with the “sacred”.

Analogies between the hut ideograms and the talismanic seals are echoed in the architecture of Malia House E; they relate to the world of “flora” or “earth” and the “chthonic” in particular, as evidenced in the context of the hut ideogram in the three scripts as well as in the talismanic iconography, Yiannouli 2006b, 44-47). Furthermore, the inscriptional associations of the Linear B 123-4 hut sign (Chadwick 1973, 50-224-231; Fig. 5:e) point to the most tangible reality of palatial industry, in which a hut-like entity generally associated with flora is involved, although it is unclear whether it should be understood in the form of hut-like vessels for measuring specific produce, or in the form of actual huts, such as the one inferred for Malia House E, or for both (Yiannouli 2006b, 44-46, 47).

Mycenaean Crete

The combined testimony of Linear B and the hut models in particular testify to the survival of the scheme “hut/flora-earth/the sacred” into Mycenaean and probably post-Mycenaean Crete. The combination of hut model and female divinity is, according to scholars, a LM IIIB or IIIC innovation (Hägg 1990, 8-10; Gesell 1985, 52-3) or a LM III Creto-Mycenaean hybrid, where the female “image was simply a revamped iconography for an old Minoan goddess” (Mercereau 1993, 15). In our view, the elements of ground/earth, its produce and perishable nature, the presence of a female divinity and the round building tradition may now be understood as an eclectic palimpsest combining older semantic strands into the symbolic vocabulary of LM III Crete (Fig. 4: 6). In other words, the clay hut models emerge as ground that

particularly Minoan customs (chthonic symbolism, female goddess) and the Minoan adaptation of an older Aegean form (round building) become symbolically manifest during LM III. One may further add that the most Mycenaean aspect of the LM III hut models is neither the Minoan goddess nor the employment of the round shape for the abode of the "sacred". Both had already been espoused by palatial Crete, although the particular combination of clay hut model and female goddess is archaeologically evidenced in LM III. Rather, it is the profusion of hut models in domestic assemblages that constitutes an apparently un-Minoan aspect, reiterating instead the older Aegean (N-EB) strand; namely the typical (or is it by now archetypical) space of *domus* in the form of the simple round house in its earlier settlement contexts. The need for such a "household shrine", according to Hägg, could be well served by the LM III model production industry at Gouves (Vallianou 1997, pl. CXXI).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The preceding discussion outlines areas of research pertinent to the general character of the Aegean evidence.

The word tradition has been used in order to convey something, which persists in a patterned way over a long period of time and/or in a broad geographical area. Recurring elements relating to architecture, stratigraphy, settlement context, chronology, iconography and associations indicate the intentional aspect of their materialization rather than the contingent character of this material, for which the term trend might have been more appropriate. Furthermore, the fact that patterned elements

may be diversified locally indicates that the inferred tradition, or its patterned imprint, is not predictable or homogeneous, but alive and so assimilated according to a local idiom, hence the regional differences encountered even within culturally compact spheres, such as the Aegean. Admittedly, the historical content of any tradition is only partially understood, if aspects of use, context and meaning of individual cases are not touched upon in the detail they deserve. A generic sense of context, as in domestic or funerary, employed here is a methodological compromise on account of the considerable chronological and geographic span of the data examined. A detailed account on use, context and meaning carries the most decisive aspects of the semantic purport of this type of architecture. We already had the chance to observe that even when discussing elements of the same order, as in pits or even rubbish-pits, the difference in the structure of their contents is not conveyed by function in a generic sense; consequently, we considered this body of data as essentially unknown but fundamental for the understanding of pit-house architecture within the Aegean sequence (Yiannouli 2006a, 30-31). Similarly, although the huts of, say Phaistos and Perachora, contain domestic types of deposits, the structural differences of these deposits are considerable and so necessary to investigate. However, this can be reached upon through a detailed examination of individual sites, rather than their common properties on a regional scale, which is the subject matter here. Given that this type of architecture constitutes a very neglected, if not avoided, body of data in the Aegean, I embarked on a general discussion of morphology, stratigraphy, chronology

and context, because they, too, are bearers of historical semantics against which the evidence from individual sites should certainly be assessed. Individual site characteristics and common features provide complementary aspects of this discussion. They need not be mutually exclusive, although their juxtaposition may reveal significant differences. That is why it is important to resort to both. In fact, the interpretation of individual cases may not eschew, I believe, the historical implications addressed in the conspectus of research topics outlined under *Discussion*.

On the one hand, the archaeological record supports the general proposition that the simplest form of architectural structure persists in different manners and contexts throughout Aegean prehistory. The affinities outlined illuminate, by way of paradox, the poor survival record of the perishable round building in Aegean settlements. A general, internal cohesion characterizes the different geographical and chronological groupings (Neolithic and Early Bronze actual buildings from settlements; the MMIII-LMI talismanic seal iconography; the post-palatial hut models). This cohesion is foremost typological in the sense of systematically occurring formal analogies. Depending on the category of evidence, it is also manifested in stratigraphy and contents (Neolithic and Early Bronze buildings from settlements), context and iconography (the Minoan evidence).

On the other hand, the general contextual associations of this particular type in culturally compact spheres indicate a process of semantic adaptation that is varying and local rather than arbitrary and incidental. The systematic study of round building morphology

within the trajectory of contextual transformations may reveal the historical purport of a general building shape. Questions of prototype or origin and relations of formal affinities apply, in our view, to the simple, perishable type as much as to the essentially unknown 3rd millennium substantial versions.

This seems to be particularly apposite for the data of prehistoric Crete. For it is the Minoan evidence, par excellence, implying that similarity of architectural form, even in the broadest “domestic” sense, does not preempt similarity of context, use or specific significance (cf. the existence of architectural types and variants and the different contexts: settlement / burial / scriptural).

Affinities of shape, seemingly cutting across aspects of use, context and date, nevertheless pose novel issues and questions. What is the range of formal variation and functional differentiation of these structures? Is functional differentiation in settlements an attribute of the Minoan society? What exactly does “domestic” entail beyond its location in settlement, particularly if it does not concern, on certain occasions, houses? Is a house form eventually retained for other functions in a settlement, when, and why? Is a tradition of architectural form connected with a special group of builders or users? Why should a cistern be round in a neopalatial settlement, given the wide range of variation in Aegean cistern morphology (Belli 1996)? The affinities between actual buildings, icons and models of buildings, scripts, language associations and iconography are too many to be considered fortuitous.

The trajectory of architectural morphology, contents and context of a general building shape calls for further

investigation along two lines: the adoption of a particular form and the adaptation of its cultural semantics through broadly-shared and locally evidenced characteristics, in the manner that the EB Aegean and Cretan communities variously converge and diverge. This typological trajectory is further useful as an essay on the sort of historical issues emanating from the treatment of the archaeological record, in the manner outlined in the foregoing Discussion. Furthermore, it provides grounds to reason as to whether the Aegean evidence may or may not constitute a viable cultural analogue compared to other parts of the world. It

also forms the necessary background against which a systematic examination of context, use and cultural semantics of individual sites or regions may now be advanced. For the foregoing account tried to define aspects deriving from the interrelations among type, stratigraphy, chronology and context in an effort to define certain historical components pertinent to the Aegean data. These are as seminal, in our view, for the reconstruction of the cultural semantics of individual cases as their intra-site characteristics and associations that formulate separate areas for future research.

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